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V
WIJNGAARD

CATWOMAN™

STRAY AGAIN?

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PAQUETTE
INF 21

ESCAPING APOKOLIPS IS HARD...
BUT ESCAPING AS A HERO WILL TAKE A MIRACLE.

MISTER MIRACLE

The Great Escape

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A new graphic novel
for young adults

JANUARY

Written by
VARIAN JOHNSON

Art by
DANIEL ISLES

GCPD BUILDING, ALLEYTOWN, GOTHAM.

FREE OUR HEROES

OUR TOWN OUR HOME

STAND UP!

LOOK AT THOSE FOOLS, *RIGS.* PROTESTING, CHEERING FOR A DAMN CRIMINAL.

WHAT'S THIS CITY COME TO?

YOU'RE KIDDING ME, RIGHT? IT'S *GOTHAM--*

--THIS IS HOW THINGS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN, *KOLLAK.*

WELL, NOT ANYMORE, DETECTIVE. NOT ON *MY* WATCH.

WE'VE GOT A CRIMINAL TO APPREHEND. PROTECT AND SERVE, AND ALL THAT!

C'MON, RIGS, WHERE'S YOUR ENTHUSIASM...?

AN UNUSUAL SUSPECT

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"...WE'VE GOT OURSELVES A *CATWOMAN* TO CATCH."

BEFORE WE BEGIN, DETECTIVES, I WANT IT ON THE RECORD THAT *MS. KYLE* IS HERE OF HER OWN VOLITION.

SHE SURRENDERED HERSELF TO CUSTODY, SO I FIND THESE HANDCUFFS TO BE ENTIRELY UNNECESSARY.

JEEZ! LOOK AT *THAT*, RIGS.

MS. KYLE HERE WENT 'N' HIRED HERSELF A REAL UPTOWN LAWYER. NEW SUIT, LEATHER BRIEFCASE, AND ALL THAT.

I'VE EVEN GOT A LAW DEGREE, A BUSINESS CARD, AND ABOUT HALF A DOZEN JUDGES ON SPEED DIAL.

SO, GENTLEMEN... THE HANDCUFFS, PLEASE?

KAPLAN
ATTORNEY AT LAW
A Face You Can Trust

ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE US TO DO, ***YOUR HIGHNESS,*** BEFORE WE STRING YOU UP AND SEND YOU AWAY FOR LIFE?

LI'L OL' ME? WHY, DETECTIVE KOLLAK... YOU ***MUST*** BE MISTAKEN!

BUT I AM SO VERY INNOCENT IN ALL OF THIS.

INNOCENT? I GOT A FILE HERE SO FAT WITH EVIDENCE THAT YOU'RE GONNA--

BEFORE WE GET INTO THAT...

...I'VE GOT A FEW QUESTIONS.

YOU WERE AT ***HADLEY'S*** FUNERAL TWO DAYS AGO. I SAW YOU.

IF YOU'RE REALLY INNOCENT IN ALL OF THIS...

"...WHY THE HELL WERE YOU THERE?

"AND WHO WERE YOU TALKING TO?"

"DETECTIVE HADLEY AND I...WE HAD A...*COMPLEX* RELATIONSHIP.

"I MET HIM IN *VILLA HERMOSA,* YOU KNOW? BEFORE HE CAME DOWN HERE TO ALLEYTOWN.

"I THOUGHT HE WAS OUT TO GET ME...BUT HE SAVED MY LIFE INSTEAD.

"MORE THAN ONCE."

"I JUST WANTED TO SAY GOODBYE.

"IS THAT SUCH A *BAD* THING?

"AND AS FOR *WHO* I WAS TALKING TO...I MET A *PRIEST* AT THE SERVICE."

YOU HERE TO KILL ME, THEN? FINISH WHAT WE STARTED?

HAHAHA...

IT WOULD BE A FITTING PLACE TO DO IT, NO?

BUT I THINK WE SHALL LET DETECTIVE HADLEY HAVE HIS DAY. WE CAN LEAVE HIM AT LEAST THAT.

I WISH HE'D NEVER GOTTEN INVOLVED.

"TO HIM, I MADE MY CONFESSIONS."

"FOR SIN INDEED WAS IN THE WORLD BEFORE THE LAW WAS GIVEN, BUT SIN IS NOT COUNTED WHERE THERE IS NO LAW."

ROMANS FIVE, THIRTEEN.

I HAVE NEVER TAKEN AN INNOCENT LIFE BEFORE.

SO I CAME HERE TO TELL YOU THIS...

BEWARE, SELINA KYLE, OF THE MANY LIVES YOU HAVE LIVED. THEY ARE ALL BOUGHT WITH THE BLOOD OF THE INNOCENT.

I GO NOW IN PENANCE FOR MY MISTAKES. AND YOU SHOULD PRAY THAT OUR PATHS MAY NEVER CROSS AGAIN.

"AND HE ABSOLVED ME OF MY SINS."

I'M SO SORRY, GENTLEMEN...

BZZZT BZZZT

...BUT I DO NEED TO TAKE THIS CALL. BIT OF AN EMERGENCY.

I DON'T CARE IF YOUR HOUSE IS BURNING DOWN. I'M NOT WAITING FOR NOTHING.

WON'T BE BUT A MOMENT!

IS THIS GUY FOR REAL?

OH, I DON'T MIND, DETECTIVE. GO AHEAD AND ASK ME ANY QUESTIONS YOU'D LIKE.

I'VE GOT *NOTHING* TO HIDE.

OKAY...

FWK

EXPLAIN *THIS*, THEN. WE FOUND HER COMATOSE, BLOODIED, AND NEARLY BEATEN TO DEATH.

AND WE'VE GOT ***MAGISTRATE FOOTAGE*** THAT PUTS YOU AT THE SCENE.

WW

"OH, *HER!* YES, OF COURSE. HOW COULD I EVER FORGET SOMEONE IN A GETUP LIKE *THAT.**

"SHE'S *SUCH* A FANTASTIC FIGHTER."

**SEE WIGHT WITCH VS. GOTHAM CITY SIRENS IN CATWOMAN #35-37! --JESS*

"SO YOU DON'T DENY IT, THEN? YOU FOUGHT HER? YOU BEAT HER UP?"

"*ME?* OH, NO, NO...YOU'VE GOT IT *ALL WRONG,* DETECTIVE.

"IT WAS ALL HER AND THE *GHOST-MAKER* GOING UP AGAINST EACH OTHER.

"I WAS JUST WATCHING FROM THE SIDELINES."

"INTERESTING THING HAPPENED AT THE END OF THE FIGHT, THOUGH.

"THE GHOST-MAKER WAS OUTMATCHED, YOU COULD TELL. I MEAN, HE'S A GOOD FIGHTER AND ALL...

"BUT IT WAS ALMOST LIKE SHE WAS IN *MULTIPLE PLACES* AT ONCE.

"THEN, OUT OF NOWHERE, LAST-GASP MANEUVER. GHOST-MAKER PULLS THIS MOVE WITH HIS KATANA."

WHSSS KWHAAAA! HUUUH!

STOP THAT.

"ANYWAY. HE SLICED CLEAN THROUGH HER MASK AND IT DROPPED OFF.

"AND FOR A SECOND, IT WAS GHOST-MAKER WHO WAS *SURPRISED*. ALMOST LIKE HE *KNEW* THE FACE BENEATH."

"SHE PICKED HER MOMENT, AND SHE MADE HER MOVE, AND THE GHOST-MAKER WAS *DONE FOR!*

"BUT THEN, *Drama!*

"HE SPOKE A NAME."

RHEA...?

"AND SHE *FREAKS OUT.* HOLDS HER HEAD IN FEAR AND SCREAMS, LIKE SHE KNOWS THE VOICE.

"THEN, JUST LIKE THAT...SHE *QUITS.*

"DROPS EVERYTHING AND LEAVES. I CAN HEAR HER HANDLERS SCREAMING OVER HER COMMS."

"BUT THERE'S NO STOPPING HER. NOTHING WILL TURN HER BACK.

"PRETTY SURE THERE'S MAGISTRATE FOOTAGE OF *THAT* TOO.

"SO, UNLESS YOU CAN EXPLAIN THAT WITH SOME *WILD THEORY* TO DO WITH SUPER-POWERED CLONES...

...I'M AFRAID YOU MIGHT HAVE A *HARD TIME* ESTABLISHING ALL THIS IN COURT.

KNOCK KNOCK

SORRY, DETECTIVE KOLLAK? CHIEF WANTS TO SEE YOU DOWN IN EVIDENCE.

NOW?

SAYS IT'S URGENT. HE SEEMS REALLY *WORKED UP.*

DAMN IT! RIGS, YOU *KEEP* HER HERE. I'M *NOT* DONE WITH HER!

I WOULDN'T DREAM OF GOING ANYWHERE, DETECTIVE. I'M QUITE ENJOYING OUR LITTLE CHAT.

YOU...

...YOU'RE UP TO SOMETHING, I CAN TELL.

BUT I KNEW YOU'D COME PREPARED FOR ALL THE BIG STUFF. THEY *ALL* DO.

IT'S THE *FINE PRINT* THAT GETS YOU.

FOUND *THESE* ALL OVER ALLEYTOWN.

KLAK

"WE'VE GOT SURVEILLANCE SHOWING *STRAYS* PUTTING THESE UP--PIGGYBACKING ON THE MAGISTRATE NETWORK.

"YOU KNOW IT'S A *CRIME* TO INTERFERE WITH GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY?"

EDWARD NYGMA SURE IS IN A *WHOLE* LOT OF TROUBLE THEN.

NYGMA?

"*THE RIDDLER.* HE'S THE ONE WHO SET THAT NETWORK UP. HE'S THE ONE WHO LISTENED IN ON THE MAGISTRATE.

"IF YOU ASK ME, I THINK HE WAS UP TO NO GOOD. *THE PENGUIN* AND NYGMA HAD SOME CROOKED DESIGNS ON THE ALLEYTOWN DOCKS."

"MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT YOU'VE GOT THEM BOTH IN CUSTODY.

"I'M SURE YOU'LL FIND YOUR ANSWER BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM."

HEY, RIDDLE ME THIS, OSWALD: WHAT IS GREEN, HAS FOUR LEGS, AND--

AH, SHUT THE HELL UP, EDWARD.

WORD IS NYGMA WAS WORKING FOR *YOU*, THOUGH.

AND SO WERE ALL THESE KNOWN CRIMINALS.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO THAT?

OH, YOU KNOW ALLEYTOWN, DETECTIVE RIGS. EVERYONE THERE IS SOME KINDA NO-GOOD, THIEVING, CONNIVING CRIMINAL!

"HOW AM *I* SUPPOSED TO KNOW WHY THE PLACE ATTRACTS THIS KIND OF UNSAVORY ELEMENT?

"BUT SINCE YOU ASKED ME WHAT I THOUGHT OF IT, I WILL SAY THIS..."

"SOMETIMES PEOPLE COME HERE WANTING TO BE *LOST*, NEVER TO BE FOUND.

"AND OTHERS, THEY COME HERE LOOKING FOR *SECOND CHANCES.*

"OR SOMETIMES JUST A FLICKER OF HOPE..."

HELLO... SH-*SHOES?* IS THAT WHAT THEY CALL YOU?

YEAH?

WHO'RE YOU?

I'M CHESH--I'M *JADE.*

JADE NGUYEN.

"...THAT SOMEHOW MANAGES TO KINDLE IN THE DARK, DOWN HERE."

N-NICE TO MEET YOU.

THAT TINY FLAME WAS ALL THAT KEPT ME GOING WHEN I WAS A KID IN ALLEYTOWN.

AND NOW YOU CAME BACK HERE TO BE THE QUEEN.

THESE KIDS, THEY NEED SCHOOLS, AND YOUTH CENTERS, AND HOSPITALS, AND MEALS, AND OPPORTUNITIES, MS. KYLE.

THEY NEED ***TEACHERS*** TEACHING THEM GEOGRAPHY AND MATH, NOT A ***THIEF*** TEACHING THEM LONG CONS.

FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY, DETECTIVE, YOU GOT SOMETHING ***RIGHT.***

"SO, I GAVE UP MY THRONE THIS MORNING.

"THE DAY I WALKED BACK INTO ALLEYTOWN, I BOUGHT ***THE NEST.*** IT USED TO BE ***MAMA FORTUNA'S*** FORTRESS, THEN IT BECAME ***MINE.***

"TODAY, I GAVE IT BACK TO THE PEOPLE IT ***BELONGS*** TO. IT'S A START, A PLACE FOR STRAYS TO FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG."

=SNF=... THERE WILL ALWAYS BE STRAYS.

AND WITH *THAT,* DETECTIVE, I THINK I'VE HAD QUITE ENOUGH QUESTIONS FOR TODAY.

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

YOU'VE RUN OUT OF THINGS TO SHOW ME FROM YOUR FILE, DETECTIVE, AND SINCE I CAME HERE OF MY OWN VOLITION...

...UNLESS YOU'RE CHARGING ME WITH ANYTHING, I BELIEVE I AM FREE TO--

SIT THE HELL DOWN.

YOU'RE NOT LEAVING THIS STATION UNLESS IT'S IN *HANDCUFFS* AND A *PRISON TRANSPORT.*

KOLLAK, SHE'S *RIGHT.* WE'VE GOT NOTHING TO HOLD HER ON.

HEY, I DON'T GIVE A ***CRAP!*** SHE'S BEEN RUNNING CIRCLES AROUND US SINCE THIS THING STARTED, AND WE'RE SUPPOSED TO JUST LET HER ***WALK OUT?***

YES, DAMN IT!

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I'M STILL A @#$%^$ COP--

WHACK

YEAH, AND I'M *DONE* WITH LETTING THE BAD GUYS *GET AWAY.*

THE CAMERAS ARE OFF AND *NO ONE'S* WATCHING, MS. KYLE.

SO, YOU AN' ME...WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A NICE, SMOOTH RIDE OUT OF THIS STATION.

WHAT'S THE PLAN HERE, KOLLAK? YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY GET AWAY WITH THIS.

REC

"YOU'RE GOING TO TRY TO ESCAPE, AND I'M GOING TO SHOOT THE CATWOMAN TO STOP HER.

"HELL, I MIGHT EVEN GET A *COMMENDATION* AT THE END OF THIS."

"AND HOW'RE YOU GOING TO EXPLAIN *HIM?*"

EXIT

"WELL, YOU'N'HIM WERE WORKING *TOGETHER*, WEREN'T YOU?

COME ON, THIS WAY...

PARKING

"I MANAGED TO CLOCK HIM, BUT YOU...YOU SURE GOT THE BETTER OF ME, SELINA KYLE.

GET IN THE CAR. *YOU'RE* DRIVING.

NICE AND SMOOTH. DON'T DRAW ANY ATTENTION TO YOURSELF AND THIS WILL ALL BE OVER SOON.

"YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK YOU WERE GOING TO GET AWAY CLEAN, DID YOU?"

SHE GOT AWAY CLEAN.

IT TOOK ME A WHILE, BUT I HAVE SOME IDEA OF THE TRUTH NOW.

OF COURSE, FIRST THING I DID WHEN I CAME OUT WAS ACCUSE KOLLAK OF KIDNAPPING SELINA KYLE.

THERE WAS A WHOLE HUE AND CRY ABOUT IT, INTERNAL AFFAIRS GOT INVOLVED, AND THAT CAUSED ALL KINDS OF PROBLEMS FOR HIM.

I TOLD YOU, I DON'T HAVE A CLUE WHAT HAPPENED TO HER! SOMEONE DRESSED LIKE A COP LOCKED ME IN THE EVIDENCE ROOM CLOSET THE WHOLE TIME. CHECK THE CAMERAS!

YOU TURNED THEM OFF!

IF I REALLY KIDNAPPED HER, WHY THE HELL WOULD I COME BACK?

BUT DESPITE THE BENT COP THAT HE WAS, I'VE COME TO BELIEVE KOLLAK WAS INNOCENT AS FAR AS THE KIDNAPPING WAS CONCERNED.

SHE PLAYED US BOTH FOR THE SAPS THAT WE WERE. I GOT A SWOLLEN JAW FOR IT.

AND KOLLAK...WELL, THEY PUT HIM ON A BOAT BEAT, AT NIGHT, BY THE NARROWS...WHERE THE REST OF THE TREATED SEWAGE FLOWS INTO THE GOTHAM RIVER.

COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED TO A BETTER GUY.

NOW, I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW SHE DID IT. BUT I SHOULD'VE SMELLED SOMETHING FUNNY THE MOMENT SHE SHOWED UP WITH THAT LAWYER.

TO VOLUNTEER INFORMATION, SHE SAID.

ACTUALLY CLAYFACE.

ALSO CLAYFACE.

CLAYFACE TOO.

AM I MAD THAT IT HAPPENED? ANGRY THAT SHE MADE US LOOK LIKE FOOLS AGAIN?

=PSSSH= IT'S THE CATWOMAN!

IT'D BE LIKE GETTING ANGRY AT THE RAIN FOR BEING WET.

I'VE BEEN HERE AT THE ALLEYTOWN PRECINCT FOR A LONG TIME, YOU KNOW?

I'VE SEEN COPS AND CRIMINALS COME AND GO. THE **KOLLAKS** GOT WHAT THEY DESERVED. THE **HADLEYS**, NOT SO MUCH.

BUT IF I'M ANGRY ABOUT ANYTHING, IT'S ABOUT ALLEYTOWN.

I KNOW IT'S A PLACE OF CON MEN AND THIEVES AND GOOD-FOR-NOTHINGS, BUT IT'S STILL SOMEONE'S **HOME**, RIGHT?

A PLACE TO REST YOUR HEAD COME DARKNESS AT THE END OF THE DAY.

AND IT LIES NOW IN RUINS. AND I'M NOT SURE I BLAME THE CATWOMAN FOR THAT. I THINK **WE** WERE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THAT ONE.

I SAY **THIS**, THOUGH...THERE'S A **SPIRIT** HERE. A WILL TO GET BACK UP ON YOUR FEET THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN IN A VERY LONG TIME.

ALLEY TOWN AUTO

THERE'S LIFE LEFT IN ALLEYTOWN JUST YET.

SO, WHAT OF THE CATWOMAN, THEN? WHERE DID SHE GO?

I HEAR SHE HAS A SISTER. MAYBE SHE WENT BACK TO SEE HER.

SHE'S SMARTER THAN THAT, THOUGH. SHE KNOWS WE'D LOOK FOR HER THERE.

I'D LIKE TO THINK SHE'S OFF IN SOME SUNNY MEDITERRANEAN CITY, THE KIND WITH IVORY BEACHES...

...WHERE SHE'S RUNNING CIRCLES AROUND SOME BILLIONAIRE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO TRY HIS HAND.

OR MAYBE SHE'S STILL AROUND, LYING LOW AND PROWLING THE ROOFTOPS AT NIGHT.

PURSUED BY SHAPES WHO THINK THEMSELVES QUICK ENOUGH TO CATCH A SHADOW.

WILL SHE BE PROWLING THE ROOFTOPS OF GOTHAM AGAIN?

HOW LONG BEFORE SAFES ARE CRACKED, HEISTS ARE PULLED, AND LONG CONS RUN AGAIN?

WILL IT BE LONG BEFORE WE'RE ALL CHASING OUR OWN TAILS, WHILE SHE GETS AWAY LAUGHING?

IT'S GOTHAM...

...I'LL BE SEEIN' YOU SOON, CAT.

NEXT: THE BAT'S OUT OF TOWN, SO THE CAT'S HERE TO PLAY!

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD.
THE ONLY WAY TO DEFEAT A MONSTER...
IS TO RESURRECT AN OLD ONE.

SWAMP THING GREEN HELL

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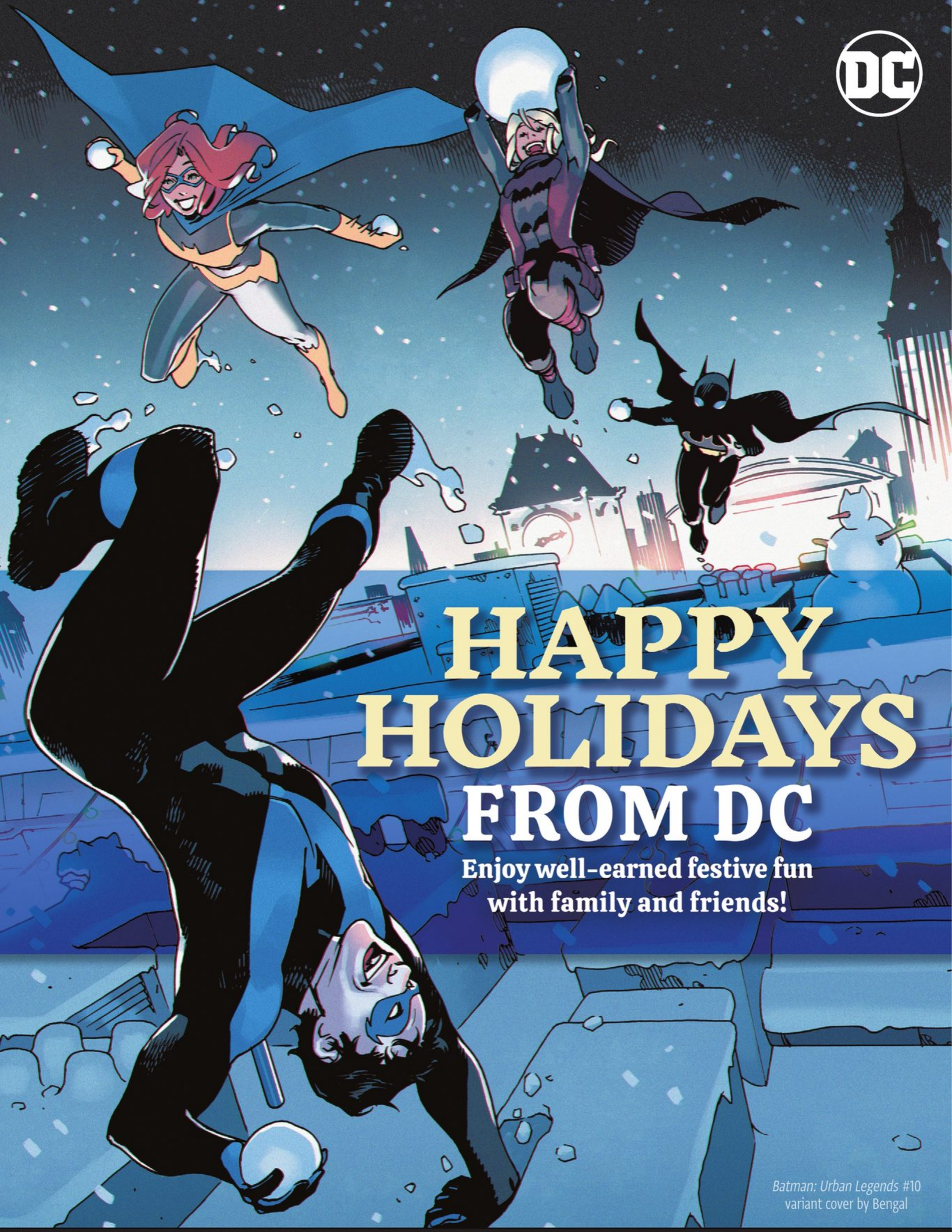

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SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"